1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

one a piece of land, and to the less favoured a large piece of gold. As the first son complained about his inheritance, his dying father told him that every grain of earth he had left for him was mixed with a grain of gold, and that if he dug well enough he would be able to extract the gold from it. After a lapse of some time the less favoured one squandered his gold, while the other, by 'digging' harder and harder, added to the fertility of his land and thus prospered and was worthy of his father's love. For this reason, the latter was taken as an ideal symbol of filial piety.

As mentioned previously, to have origin in the village is also to have land, and this is reflected in the scheme of the village land. The cultivable land was divided between the descendants of 'On and Musa, the two brothers, who were the heads of the village sections.[1] It is maintained that every ten kasabas (land-measure) of land owned by 'On clansmen is followed by another ten kasabas owned by Musa clansmen. 'If you have no sahm or kirat (land-measure) handed over to you from your ancestors, then you are not a full member of your clan,' Ali stated, 'and two families had to migrate from the village to another village because they had to sell their land. It is the worst lot that can befall any person. It brings disgrace to him to abandon his father's trust, and it also means that he is sinning against his children. There are few people still in the village who have sold their land, and they are like those who have shed their clothes and remained stark naked; both are the two great shame-bringing practices.'

Yet those who are under considerable economic pressure resort to the device of 'land-pawn' which entails the owner's handing over of his land to a man in return for a comparatively large sum of money. The latter tills the land as if it was his possession, to be returned to its original owner on his payment of the debt. Another way of relieving economic distress without actually selling the land is the so-called 'conditional sale', whereupon the owner sells with option to repurchase at a given date.

If selling land is one of the worst social practices, the acquisition of land is naturally the best one. To be able to add to one's inheritance is a sign of parents' approval and content with their son's deeds as well as God's blessing. It is interesting to find children about the age of five or six singing a rhyme, telling how a chicken given to a child by his mother has enabled him in the long run to acquire a 'kirat'—one twenty-fourth of a feddan. The rhyme goes on to say, 'My mother gave me a chicken, the chicken bought me a goose, the goose bought me a small goat, the goat bought me a sheep, the sheep bought me a small donkey, the donkey bought me a cow and the cow bought me a kirat'. There is another version of the same song, differing in what the cow bought for the child, and in the other version he got a 'bride' and the bride got him a 'bridegroom—a son'.[2]

From the point of view of land tenure, the village is a typical example of

[1] See Chapter II for social structure.
[2] The rhyme is occasionally associated with bouncing the ball on the wall.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

It is not claimed that these figures are anything but approximate, but they at least bring out the proportionate amount of work and show clearly the labour that can be undertaken by children in this agrarian community. They reveal that a 13-year-old boy can contribute to almost two-thirds of the actual labour in the cultivation of the land (his solo contribution for the winter crop being 440 hours out of 720; and 536 hours out of 888 hours for the summer crop).

One can assess from the approximate figures the paramount importance of children as a non-salaried essential in the labour-force, especially in a community where hired labour is extremely difficult to get. Moreover, it is not difficult to appreciate the maxim that an early son is of great service. It is a part of filial piety for a son to be expected to perform all that is within his capacity to relieve his father.[1] Thus from the economic point of view, a child's process of growing up connotes his father's gradual relinquishing of all the farm tasks he has been carrying out hitherto. One of the ideals of family life is for the children to do the things their parents have been doing before, as he who resembles his father has committed no injustice. This criterion is one of the elements involved in describing a boy or a girl as 'muaddab' or 'muaddabah'—disciplined. If the father has grown-up children to rely upon for work, this would certainly enhance his social prestige, being able through more leisure to participate fully in the social events, mediations and informal gatherings as he can afford the time for them.

Children are thus considered to be leisure-giving to their parents; since a leisurely father is one who is not hard-pressed by work and usually designated as 'sheikh arab'. Yet sons sometimes resent the excessive indulgence of their fathers in this privilege, when they feel that they themselves are overworked, or when incited by their in-laws or 'pah' that they are working like a donkey while father is acting like 'a great arab sheikh, enjoying the shade and the council'. In some cases, this might lead to son and father friction, which might result in the former quitting the village.

A few people in the village have land, but no sons. In connection with this, Ali remarked that this is one of the ways in which God tested his creatures, by not letting them have both land and sons. Such people have to get permanent hired labour for the cultivation of their land; and these are euphemistically dubbed 'participants'. The owner provides the animals, implements, and seeds for work, while the participants provide the labour, receiving in return a quarter of the crop. Sometimes a part of the land is let to a person, the owner having nothing to do with it, but receiving one-third, or sometimes one-half, of the total crop besides paying the tax.

The economic contribution of boys applies equally to girls in connection with the household work. Girls are expected to co-operate with mothers in domestic tasks, and, as they grow older, to be increasingly able to relieve their mothers so that the latter can widen their social activities and

[1] See in this connection children's statements in the *Moral Ideology Test*, Appendix IX.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

mitting adultery is motivated by emulation', 'Make your harvest look big, otherwise your enemies will rejoice'.[1]

The pride in the family unity and name is associated with its labour on the land. One can see the effect of the driving motive of emulation in the appearance of the outer sections nearer to the road or to the canal. Special attention is always given to these sections, as they are usually the most elevated and best cultivated sections of the land. The main ideal for which every family strives is to be 'mastourah', which literally means to be covered, or, in other words, to be balanced and publicly approved and not exposed to outside shaming. The special attention given to the outer sections of the field would at least rid the farmer of shame, if the rest of his field were not properly cultivated. Esteem and honour are accorded by the villagers to those who have made a success of their farming, and this is usually mixed up with a feeling of envy. To be an industrious farmer attending to his business is a good qualification for a youth about to get married, while slothfulness militates against his chances. Parents stimulate their sons of marriageable age to work hard as an incentive for their marriage as early as possible.

In a discussion of livelihood in the village, an evaluation of the standard of living is a necessary step for the full appreciation of the villagers' life. It has been made clear by anthropologists that the standard of living is not only a matter of production and consumption, but equally depends on the cultural values that govern these processes. 'In no society do we find people consuming whatever comes to hand or producing the minimum necessary for existence with the least possible effort. Man is a rational being, and hence there are reasons to be discovered for his choice of food and clothing and for the efforts which he makes to produce the objects of his choice.'[2] These cultural premises are implicit in every society, determining, to a great extent, the ways in which individuals handle their 'material culture'.[3]

In the previous pages reference has been made to some of the social incentives for work, but accumulation of wealth has not been included. For contentment with what one possesses, as predestined by God, is the keynote of the villagers' happiness. In some dwellings and guest houses this ideal is written on the wall, 'Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure'. One should not amass wealth, but should spend it in pious acts, otherwise, according to the Koran, as Ali recited, 'With the gold and silver a man accumulates he would be seared on the forehead, on the side, and on the

[1] A popular story is told about a jealous farmer whose neighbour enquired from him about the amount of fertiliser he distributed in every section (hod). He told him that he usually put two basketfuls; and thus the neighbour followed his advice. But later on the latter found that his cultivation was not as good as that of the farmer, and discovered that it was due to the fact that his neighbour used to distribute three baskets, and not two as he had told him.

[2] Margaret Read, *Native Standards of Living and the African Culture Change*, p. 11.

[3] For a quantitative assessment of the standard of living in Silwa, see Appendix III.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

593 On the whole, the structural attitude of husband to wife is one of possession and protection. While the husband assumes the major role in all the activities outside the house, the woman rules almost supreme in matters connected with the household organization.

The second pattern of relationship is that between father and children. With his children, as with his wife, the father avoids excessive intimacy in order to be respected and obeyed. By keeping social distance, he can be regarded as the most powerful agent in administering the moral and social code of conduct. Through his curt and abrupt admonitions he controls both his sons and daughters. In practice he has more to do with his sons, while the mother has more to do with her daughters, but of course there is a great degree of overlapping. There are no serious clashes between parents as to their respective rights of rearing the children. The mother always tries to keep her children quiet while their father is in the house.

The absolute authority of the father over children is due to the fact that [611] they belong to him and his family of orientation. Yet it is also recognized that only the mother and the mother's people can provide the immature children with affection and tenderness. According to Moslem law, imma- [586] ture children, in case of divorce, can be kept with the mother till the age of seven for a boy, and the age of nine for a girl, while the father sends the expenses of upbringing to the mother. If the mother dies the care and [855] upbringing of children is usually entrusted to their maternal aunt or maternal grandmother.

The authority of the parents is sanctioned by the Koran. Obedience of [577] children to their parents comes next to the Moslem's major obligations to God and the Prophet. Disobedience to parents ('okouk al walidain) is one of the major sins which is harshly punished in the next world, and, according to Ali, even in this world. A disobedient son or daughter will never live a successful or happy life on earth, and the parents' curse might even affect the son's or daughter's children. To obtain the parental blessing, he continued, is more important than to inherit land or wealth from them, as having their blessing is a prerequisite for both piety and success. Thus, if the father is to wield authority and provide protection, the son or daughter must show 'filial piety' and submission to him as well as to the mother.

One can cite many avoidances that a son must observe in connection with his father, especially in public. A mature son is not expected to sit beside his father in the same gathering; and if his presence is required he should play a very subordinate role, usually evidenced by the fact that he speaks as little as possible, and withdraws at the earliest possible opportunity. If it happens that the father is sitting on a bench at a funeral, for example, the son should sit on the ground; and if he has to sit on a bench, he should not sit on the same bench as his father, or on one opposite to him in order to avoid the face to face position. If the son is lying on the ground, he should sit upon seeing his father passing by; and he should never

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MK13
Silwa

be sitting while his father is standing. Of course, he cannot smoke in his father's presence, or do anything that might imply that he is not giving full attention to his father.

Amongst the children, the eldest son is favoured by his parents as he is the first to relieve his father of some of his tasks. The importance of age and sex in parents' treatment of their children shows itself, for instance, in the distribution of meat. Boys, on the whole, receive more than girls, and the older gets more than the younger. To vary this order is regarded as one of the means of reward or punishment for the children. An elder son is not expected to argue 'face to face' with his father if the latter refuses any of the former's demands. In this case he has to send a messenger to negotiate with his father. Complete identification with the father is reflected in the saying, 'Your father's enemy is your enemy and your father's friend is your friend', which is also a further evidence of the importance of family and clan solidarity. The observance of the proper rules of conduct with parents as well as with other relatives is the tangible attribute of children described as 'muaddabeen' meaning disciplined (often wrongly translated literally as 'polite'). In his role, the father has to combine discipline backed by moral sanctions.[1]

The relations of children to the mother are certainly warmer, intimate and more affectionate. The mother's tenderness and affection for her children should be repaid in obedience, service and respect. Ali told me that a mother's prayers for her children are the most effective appeal to God. Respect and regard for her is enjoined upon her sons and daughters by the Koran and the Prophetic tradition that says 'Paradise is at the feet of mothers'.

The relationship between brothers is expected to be one of complete solidarity. The common saying goes: 'Support your brother whether he is the oppressor or the oppressed.' If a mother sees her sons squabbling over anything, she admonishes, asking them to deal with each other 'like brothers'. The admonition is also exercised when a boy stranger comes to visit the family, and the boys are asked to go out and play 'like brothers'. However, the first-born has a prominent position among his brothers and sisters. He acts as his father's representative. He gives orders to the younger brothers and sisters, and at least threatens them with punishment, sometimes telling his father. Other members of the family acknowledge and even support the prerogative of the first-born son. But, on the whole, brothers are expected to form a united front and act as 'two heads under one cap'. Older married brothers are usually held to be responsible for the care of their younger brothers and sisters after the death of the father.

Yet, in spite of the fact that brothers are expected to stand by each other through thick and thin, they are not encouraged to walk, sit or play together, especially after the age of eleven or twelve. If two or three brothers

[1] M. Fortes, 'Parenthood in Primitive Society' (summary of a lecture given in *Man*, Vol. LI, May 1951).

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

she curtails her nursing period but never before the termination of the first year. In this case, the 'milking goat', whose milk is preferred to that of a cow, being 'lighter', would help in feeding the child. My female informant insisted that the contrary never occurs, that a woman prolongs her nursing period to prevent pregnancy. At this point the official ideology of women differs from that in Artas as stated by Granqvist in the following quotation:

'As it is generally assumed that nursing makes a new pregnancy more difficult it may be thought that the women use it in self-protection, to postpone the unwished-for pregnancy. Women's work is so hard that it is almost unbelievable that they should wish to be constantly bearing children.'

The writer has enquired whether the same is being practised in Silwa, but he was assured the opposite. His informant might have wanted to hide this fact, as the logical conclusion of the relationship between conception and lactation lends itself to its use in the self-protective way mentioned by Granqvist. The informant added that it is the child's indisputable right to suck as long as it wants, otherwise it would become obstinate and disobedient, and it is only to pursue the more desired aim of fresh pregnancy that the mother is obliged to curtail the nursing period.

It is also recognized that a boy is usually nursed less than a girl, which also differs from the custom in Artas. The purpose is that though both should be infused with the mother's compassion, the girl is supposed to be imbued with more of it than the boy, and consequently her nursing should be longer. Yet if a newly-married woman begets a girl in her first birth, the custom is to curtail her nursing period in order to hurry the next pregnancy in the hope of begetting a boy. The short period of boys' nursing compared to that of girls' is also a clear indication of the accelerating process of boys' growth. The case of the boy who is brought up by a widow and nursed for a long time is a proverbial one for 'his unreliability, his being easily swayed, and his inability to make up his mind'. Any person who evidences such character traits is designated as one who was brought up by a widow.[1]

The different claims of the patrilineal and the matrilineal sides on the infant express themselves in the assumed different attitudes between father and mother with regard to weaning. While mothers consider a long period of suckling as conducive to compassion, fathers regard it as 'darkening the infant's mind'. This difference in attitude towards weaning could be taken as a reflection of the matrilineal sentiment, contrasted with the paternal desire of subjecting the infant to social discipline as early as possible.[2]

What is also significant is the rigid observance of the nursing of the child by his relatives. One of the main injunctions of the Koran is the pro-

[1] It also means that he has not been disciplined by his father, as will be shown later.
[2] See Chapter II.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

he did not play games at all. Boys and girls become 'muaddab' if they do not mix in play after the age of eleven or twelve. After the age of twelve, a girl would be considered 'muaddab' if she drops her glance and keeps clear of male gatherings, and when she becomes older, covers part of her face if she is passing by a group of men. A boy is 'muaddab' if he recognises that he should sit in the back row on going to the mosque. As Mahmoud put it, a disciplined boy or girl is one who knows when and where to sit and stand, where and when to put his or her feet and thus become 'Ibn halal' (literally 'heir to the permissible'). Ali, on the other hand, expressed the importance of 'giving adab' to children by saying that it is believed that one of the signs of the end of this world will be when discipline and modesty (adab wa haya) disappear from the acts and deeds of the people.

The keynote to the educational process is the eagerness of the adults to create a docile attitude in their children and thus make them acquire filial piety.[1] The children readily accept the authority of their seniors, whether in work or play, and they endeavour to avoid their anger. This ready acceptance of the authority of those older than the child is epitomized in the axiom: 'He who is one day older than you, is in fact wiser by one year', which is a common saying often repeated by adolescent boys and girls. A child of twelve told me that it was always better to avoid the outbursts of one's elders: one of their curses might receive a hearing from God.

The ideal norm of 'adab' is a value which also has its religious sanction, as a pious son (ibn salih) is synonymous with 'muaddab'. Such a value does not only include the child's economic services and his observance of the expected social behaviour, but also implies a pattern of reciprocity between child and family. A father who neglects the care of his 'polite' children may be frequently exposed to illness, failure of crop, or death of cattle. Moreover, a family that infringes on the moral and religious code may consequently have sickly children. This connection between the moral values and the welfare of the family could be illustrated by the children's swearing by their parents' life and honour.[2] One also hears from the villagers that a loss of a son, or a camel, or sudden illness, is caused by the dealing of the inflicted person in usury, his swearing untruthfully by the name of Allah or his children, his giving false evidence in court, or spreading malicious gossip. It is clear that the welfare of the family members, children as well as adults, is contingent on some basic reciprocal relations fused with moral and religious sanctions.[3]

Besides learning from their parents and elders, children also learn

[1] M. Fortes maintains that filial piety, in patrilineal societies, is a value counteracting the suppressed antagonism between father and son, and mother and daughter. *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, p. 347.

[2] A father may swear 'by the neck' of his son where life is supposed to be located.

[3] See Chapter III for religious justification of offspring.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

865 wrangle and quarrel with her, are rude to her, run outside the house and throw stones at the door or climb the wall and swear at her. On the other hand, children feel that the mother is their most reliable source of care 861 and affection, and that she is more accessible and amenable than the 593 father. In this capacity she is the one usually approached for expressing their wishes or asked to mediate between them and the father. Mothers themselves recognize that their treatment of children is different from that of the father. This is epitomized in the mothers' popular saying to their children in persuading them to obey them: 'On the death of my father I eat dates; on the death of my mother I eat hot coal.' In this way the mother tries to win from her offspring assistance and service as she is not invested with the same power of authority as the father. On the other hand, withdrawal from the father, keeping away from his bed while he [861] is asleep, and keeping quiet while he is about the house, is told and retold to children by the mother or older siblings for fear of punishment. The father's authority cannot be flouted; and a change in the tone of his voice must be seriously considered. Although his punishment might be less frequent than that of the mother, yet it is certainly more severely administered. While the former pinches the ear, or the thigh, and seldom slaps, the latter normally slaps and thrashes with a rope or a cane.

861 It is also worth noting here that very little chance is given to the child to justify his misdemeanour, and hardly any effort is made to persuade him to avoid falling into the same error. Moreover, in administering punishment, there is no consistency or regularity; for the same offence the child might be beaten harshly, or his offence allowed to pass unnoticed. This depends, of course, on the parents' mood, or on their feeling towards the child at that particular time.

● 577 Such methods for disciplining the child normally lead to the child's attempts to tell lies or go for things in a roundabout way to evade punishment. He would swear that he has not committed a fault and that it is someone else who is responsible for it, or that he was forced by older or [859] stronger boys to do it.[1] Deceptive tricks are frequently adopted in games when, for instance, a boy tries to frighten another boy by saying that the latter's father is approaching with a stick and thus seek to compel him to leave the game. An older boy, in trying to deceive younger children, would run in front of them shouting in terror, 'The Silowa is coming, the Silowa is coming', and the young boys would disperse. One boy might tell a group of boys an untrue story, and if the teller succeeds in making his listeners 'swallow' it he would vaunt his triumph over them by saying, 'I've been telling lies. I've cut your ears off—Kaddabt 'alaikum, gattat wadanaikum.'

[1] It is interesting to note that in the Kuttab (Koran school), Kuttab sheikh enquires from one of the boys about his misdemeanour and the other boys volunteer without being asked to give evidence confirming the boy's offence. With this also goes constant attempts of children to correct each other's behaviour or ways of learning or attention.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

It does not require any emphasis here to point out that the effects of these techniques of fear as forcing children to resort to lies and deception are reflected later in the prevailing atmosphere of adult life which is charged with suspicion, secrecy and apprehension. Fear, moreover, is an efficient lever for the maintenance of social cohesion in the pattern of father-son relationship, and hence it is not surprising to find the common saying that 'fear is a blissful thing' (al khof baraka).

The popular sayings connected with the administering of punishment are also varied and inconsistent, perhaps to maintain a balance and to avoid excess. On the one hand one hears phrases such as 'If you don't beat the child, nothing good would come out of him', 'The stick is for the disobedient', 'Those who do not feel, the stick would make them feel'. On the other hand, there are other sayings such as 'The stick makes the boy dumb'. 'The threat would have no effect on those who do not obey spontaneously', It is considered, however, that childhood is the most appropriate period for punishing and disciplining the child. It is said that the child during this time is like the maize plant in its second irrigation (this irrigation is considered to be important for the plant's growth and is preceded by the pulling out of the grass and other weeds). The concentration of punishment at this period is justified on the grounds that the boy or the girl at this stage is neither too young nor too old to learn. The only form of corporal punishment administered to adolescents on some rare occasions is slapping.

However, the administering of punishment by parents to children is checked from being unduly excessive by other relatives, neighbours or other adults who happen to be present. Mediation (literally separation—'hajazat') as institutionalized in the 'Arab council' is an important force in the legal and social functioning of the community.[1] It is practised by children themselves and even mock fights are sometimes played by them to enjoy the wranglings of conciliation similar to those amongst the adults. Some children told me that on seeing their parents quarrelling, they immediately go out of the house to invite one of their close relatives for mediation. Adults are also expected to stop children's fights if they happen to be passing by, and even punish the disputants.[2]

It is appropriate here to evaluate the period of childhood in Silwa, in comparison with their period of infancy. With the exception of observing sex and religious norms, childhood in Silwa is the period through which a boy or a girl experiences a great number of the pressures of socialization. Some modern anthropologists have pointed out the importance of discontinuities or inconsistencies in child-rearing practices as relevant cultural data especially in connection with personality organization.[3] Esther Goldfrank, for instance, postulates four categories of societies with regard to

[1] See Chapter II. [2] See Appendix X, 'Story Completion'.

[3] Ruth Benedict, 'Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning', in *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture*, ed. by Kluckhohn and Murray, p. 414.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

guilt, especially with regard to sex, produce the psychological disposition to sexual jealousy institutionalized in this community as well as in many other communities in rural Egypt? It is well known that in Egypt disputes over land, water and women rank as three of the most common causes of crime.[1] This does not mean that sibling rivalry and sex prohibitions are the only causes, but seem to provide the psychological field for the moral and religious values connected with fidelity and the propriety of sexual jealousy. A woman is identified not only with 'shame' but also with 'honour' and to preserve one's honour is tantamount to avoid exposure to shame.[2]

These attitudes, according to Kardiner, would also help to understand the dichotomy of sexes and to prevent sexual jealousies from coming out to open hostilities. They also appear to be one of the weapons of social equilibrium and of preserving in-male and in-female solidarity.[3]

Here it is also possible to give some satisfactory answer to the connection between the nature of the community and its demands on individuals as represented by sexual regulations. The central and principal quality in a polite (muaddab) or virtuous person is his conformity to the norms governing sexual behaviour; the flouting of which in any manner would condemn him as impolite and vicious irrespective of his other qualities. Morality and virtue are primarily connected with stringent sexual controls. The villagers, although envying the city dwellers their material comfort, deplore their moral laxity, e.g. women's emancipation in dress, love affairs, use of cosmetics, women's participation in men's work. In this community I heard of no cases of adultery or illegitimate children for the last thirty years, though cases of homosexuality and jokes about sexual pleasure from animals are not uncommon amongst the adolescents and young men. Stringent sexual controls are an essential agent for the maintenance of solidarity, the cohesion and the orderly living of a group with its puritanic religious code and its social organization based, among other things, on a clear-cut sex dichotomy.[4]

Whatever views may be held about the psychological problems connected with adolescence in Silwa, this stage is certainly the prologue to the full status of adulthood which is eventually attained by marriage. Marriage, after circumcision, marks the greatest ceremonial occasion in the individual's life. The best way of describing marriage conditions in Silwa is to give an account of a marriage ceremony which the writer

[1] Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East*, London, 1948.

[2] Cf. J. C. Flugel, *Men and their Motives*, London, 1943, and Ernest Jones, *Papers on Psycho-analysis*, where he writes: 'The ultimate source of the fear and guilt that lie behind all these reactions (of sexual jealousy) is the relationship to another potential man and it is derived from the boy's unconscious fixation on childish attitudes; it is hard for him to "picture" a woman quite apart from another man to whom she secretly belongs.' p. 483.

[3] A. Kardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 476–7.

[4] See Margaret Read, 'The Moral Code of the Ngoni and their former Military State', in *Africa*, Vol. XI, 1938.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Little girls have a perfectly free life until they reach marriageable age, when their freedom is somewhat more restricted. After marriage they are still more secluded, but the degree of seclusion varies, being rather stricter among the better-class peasants than among those of lower social status. Among the latter there may be considerable freedom of intercourse between the sexes. It must be remembered that there are quite definite social grades among the *fellāḥīn*, the lines of demarcation being very strongly em-

FIG. 14. A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN

phasized. For instance, in a family well known to me the women are not allowed to speak freely to the men, and, with the exception of the elderly mother, none of the females are allowed to enter a room in which male visitors may be seated, and even the mother does not appear unless there is something which renders her presence necessary. One of the women in this family is a widow of about thirty years of age, possibly a little older, and her brother objects to her even being seen walking in the streets of their village, except when she goes, accompanied by her mother, to get the water for household use or for some other necessary purpose. He told me that if he allowed her to be seen walking about in public

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

places his family would at once lose their position, and they would be looked down upon as nobodies. To our Western ideas such restrictions are apt to be regarded as a form of tyranny, but it is not a fair judgment. Seclusion is partly a sign of respect among Egyptians, and indicates the value that the men put upon their womenfolk. Most of the women have unfortunately a difficult and dangerous temperament, which, until they have learnt self-control, and have been inspired with higher ideals, makes them anything but an elevating influence in village society.

Though theoretically they are supposed to be entirely in subjection to the male sex, in practice they can, and often do, maintain a very firm hold on their husbands. I have known many men who are in mortal terror of their wives. Indeed, I am often inclined to think that it is the poor oppressed Egyptian *man* who has a claim to my sympathy, and that the over-ruled, oppressed wife is somewhat of a myth.

More often than not a man marries a girl from his own village, the favourite marriage being with a daughter of his father's brother. On the smallest provocation, some imagined slight, for example, a girl will run off to her father's or brother's house, and remain there until her husband, from fear of mischief being made against him in the village by his wife's relations, is induced to agree to do whatever his wife demands of him. She may require him to buy her gold earrings, a nose-ring, an anklet, or fine clothes, and, though a poor man, he may feel obliged to purchase one or more of these articles for fear of what his wife may do. Many men have run into debt for such reasons.

A man of my acquaintance, who owns a certain amount of land and is by way of being one of the rather superior people of his village, divorced his wife a year or two ago. She was quite a decent woman, but, her relations being poor, she had no land of her own, and, moreover, her husband's brother had died, bequeathing his widow a *feddān* (acre) of land and a little money. My acquaintance had his eye on this land, which was family property, belonging originally to his father, and the only way he could obtain it was by marrying his brother's widow. He did not want to have two wives, for it is expensive to keep up such an establishment ; also, monogamy is becoming much more common in Egypt, and to have more than one wife is looked upon as rather barbarous even among the peasants. The only thing to do was to get rid of his first wife.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 192?
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organised* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *kâḍi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

obtains for his business, probably refrained from examining the statement as to age made by the girl's parents.

The childbearing age lasts over a long period, for girls mature early, and it is a common thing in Egypt for a woman of fifty to give birth to a child. From an economic point of view it is probably an advantage that so many of the children die, for otherwise the country would soon become over-populated. What is so desirable is that those who do survive should be brought up in healthier surroundings, both moral and physical, and without the unnecessary suffering inflicted upon them by the ignorance of the mothers.

FIG. 17. YOUNG GIRL DRESSED UP TO ATTRACT A HUSBAND

In spite of the frequently indecent talk on sexual matters, there is a strict moral code, especially with regard to unmarried girls, the infringement of which often entails a terrible punishment. This seems somewhat unfair on the girls, considering the atmosphere in which they are brought up. If a girl has misconducted herself before marriage, and is discovered at marriage to be unchaste, the disgrace to her family is looked upon as such a terrible one that her own parents will often kill her, sometimes taking the unfortunate child—for she is hardly more than a child—into the desert, and there dispatching her, usually, I

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

believe, by cutting her throat. Unfaithfulness in a wife may likewise be punished by death, sometimes death by drowning. If her paramour also is caught they may be thrown into the river or a canal together.

The moral standard is very much lower in some villages than others, and I have observed that villages of pure, or comparatively pure, Egyptian stock are more moral sexually, more honest, and less prone to crimes of violence than are those of mixed negro or Arab origin.

In any case, it is not fair to judge these peasants too harshly. Much cannot be expected of them in their present condition of ignorance, and I believe that until the women can be depended on to exercise a purer and higher influence on their society there is not much prospect of the moral tone of the village communities being raised.

In later years a woman, especially if she has sons, has an honourable position in the family. A man's love and respect for his mother is a marked characteristic among Egyptians, and even after marriage the mother retains the highest place in her son's love and respect. Some years ago I was told that if a man ill-treated his mother and did not show her the greatest honour and respect the whole village would consider him a reprobate. In the married son's household his mother reigns supreme, and the wife who does not show proper respect to her mother-in-law usually has no chance of finding favour with her husband. As an old friend of mine, a man who had always had the greatest veneration and love for his mother, once said to me, " My wife is good, and I am pleased with her, but she must remain there [pointing downward]. My mother is up there [pointing upward]. Did she not carry me here for nine months [pressing his hands on his stomach]? Did she not endure pain to give me birth, and did she not feed me from her breast? How could I not love her? She is always first and above all with me. My wife may change and may lose her love for me. My mother is always the same; her love for me cannot change."

I fear I may seem to have given a very unpleasant impression in many respects of the peasants of Egypt, but I have dwelt on the darker side of the picture at some length not because there is no brighter side, nor because I am lacking in appreciation of the many excellent qualities to be found in most of my village friends. It is

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

586 593 tion, especially amongst the womenfolk, might appear tragi-comic when they harp endlessly upon the shortcomings of the spouses, and their respective families. Complaints and gossip are heard about things such as the inability to provide the right amount of henna for the bride; or the bride's family's bad cooking of the groom's pigeons; the quality of the girl's jewellery and endless small things which reveal the difficulties of the adjustments of the individual family to an equally important wider circle of the joint family.

586 The following table shows that the percentages of divorce for the whole country reach their highest during the first two years of marriage.

TABLE IV

Relation between divorce and the duration of marriage between 1942 and 1946 in Egypt

Duration of marriage	1942 %	1943 %	1944 %	1945 %	1946 %
Less than a month	4·20	4·31	4·46	3·88	3·99
One–six months	14·60	15·70	16·30	14·50	14·20
Six months–one year	12·50	13·10	14·40	14·60	13·05
One–two years	18·4	18·10	20·90	20·30	20·30
Two–three years	11·0	11·90	13·60	14·50	13·70
Three–four years	7·55	9·05	8·34	7·82	8·60
Four–five years	5·80	4·87	5·04	5·53	5·40
Five–ten years	15·30	13·10	13·70	12·30	11·90
Ten–fifteen years	5·42	5·23	5·10	4·63	4·74
Fifteen–twenty years	2·42	2·40	2·32	2·12	2·00
Twenty years and more	2·78	2·66	2·38	2·09	2·12[1]

Here a short note on divorce seems necessary. The right and power to divorce one's wife is part of the male ethos in this community. According to Moslem law (Sharia) a man can divorce his wife twice and on both occasions can take her back. If he repeats any formula of divorce three times or says, 'You are divorced threefold' (talga bi attalati), then the divorce is final; and husband and wife can only remarry on certain conditions.[2] Recently, in Egypt, the threefold formula of divorce has come to be regarded as one statement, and husband and wife can reunite immediately after its utterance if they wish.

The word 'divorce' is also used as a conditional oath by men to convince others of the truth of a statement, or to force them to accept an offer or conform to a desire.[3]

[1] These percentages are worked out from the *Pocket Census of 1948*, Govt. Press, Cairo, 1950, p. 50 (in Arabic). [2] Cf. S. G. Fitzgerald, *Muhammadan Law*.
[3] Hilma Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*, pp. 297–8.

1; Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

The following table shows the percentages of monogamous and polygamous marriages among the Moslem population in the country as a whole.

TABLE V

Percentage of monogamous and polygamous marriages

Number of wives	1927	1937
One wife	95·18	96·86
Two wives	4·49	2·95
Three wives	0·29	0·17
Four wives	0·04	0·02[1]

What does it feel like to be a newly married bride, confined to her house, with the occasional temptations of stealing a peep through the holes of the door onto the outside world? What is her complex emotion on seeing her husband returning home or while serving him, washing his hands, watching him eat, etc.? Does she fear her first sexual experience? Does her husband show an affection towards the girl in sexual intercourse? Are other erogenous zones used in sex? What are the overtones of small talk, if any, between husband and wife in the midst of the recurrent experiences of sexual intercourse which is one of the great pleasures in such a culture?[2] Such issues are significant to a study of the factors influencing the interaction of culture and personality. The writer cannot claim to give any substantial answer to such questions as the whole issue is taboo and it would be impossible for a person who is normally part of this culture to raise such points without endangering his prestige.

By getting married, the bridegroom and bride have achieved the hallmark of adulthood; and this brings satisfaction to one's parents. The transfer of the wife to the patrilocal residence is usually thought of after she bears a child, and by then her mother prepares for her a special headcover (tawada) to enable her to go out. The wife's settlement in her husband's house does not end her connection with her family, as it is her father's home which is always opened for her as a safeguard against any maltreatment from her husband or other members of his family.[3]

[1] *Pocket Census of 1948*, p. 12.

[2] It is a well-known fact that some newly wed husbands become impotent during their first sexual experiences and are usually then called tied (marbout). In such cases, a religious man would be invited to read for him, or write a charm which he wears under his clothes. Sometimes when this fact is known, a friend of this married man would go and tell him that he has 'tied' him; and for this the friend would invite the husband to a meal of pigeons.

[3] When a wife forsakes her husband's home for her father's she is known as 'hardani', and mediators or an Arab council would try to reconciliate the two sides. For a similar situation see Hilma Granqvist, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–32.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Mawlid Salma (Prophet's Life-story).

These books are usually obtained from an itinerary vendor who occasionally visits the village. Amongst those who own books, three persons actually possess the bulk of the books found in the village: they are the Sheikh of the recognized 'Kuttab', a village school teacher, and an ambitious young man who owns a shop in the village at present, after having spent more than ten years in Cairo and Alexandria. Yet perhaps none of these people possess more than a dozen books.

As to the spread of the newspapers, there are ten persons in this community of over three thousand people who buy newspapers, although not regularly. They get them from a distributor travelling by local train. Three of the newspaper buyers are shopkeepers, while two others are teachers in the compulsory school. News naturally infiltrates to a large extent through reading aloud the news in the village gatherings, or through borrowing the newspapers. Up to 1951 there was no radio set in the village and, of course, no cinema, thus contact with the outside world, as far as these aids are concerned, was entirely absent.

The extent of literacy in this community could also be expressed in the number of people who have been to any school other than those educational institutions existing in the village (before the establishment of the primary school in the village). The following is a list enumerating all the boys and men who are receiving some kind of education outside the village:[1]

Nine boys in the primary school in Aswan (under 12 years old).

One boy in the secondary school in Aswan (14 years old).

Six boys in the Training College for Elementary Teachers in Aswan.

Two elementary school teachers who are actually teaching in the village compulsory school.

One higher education.

In analysing these educated people from the village, it is important to show the various incentives for their education. Four of those in the primary school and the elementary training college are cousins: the father of two of them is an Azharite and a teacher at the village school, and it is not surprising that he should send his two sons to school in Aswan. Two years ago, however, his younger brother quarrelled with him, and decided to vie with him at every turn, even in sending two of his sons to the same schools as those of his brother. Two of the other boys are sons of a relatively well-off woman who forced her husband to divorce her. She then married a younger man, and managed to keep her two sons under her custody by sending them to school and personally bearing the expenses incurred by their education in Aswan, as the father himself could not do so. One of the boys in the primary school in Aswan is the son of a blind man who possesses practically no land and on receiving aid (£E2 a month) for his disability from the Ministry of Endowment, decided to send his son to school.

[1] There are no village girls at all who have received or are receiving education outside the village compulsory school.

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

562 565 521 577 places his family would at once lose their position, and they would be looked down upon as nobodies. To our Western ideas such restrictions are apt to be regarded as a form of tyranny, but it is not a fair judgment. Seclusion is partly a sign of respect among Egyptians, and indicates the value that the men put upon their womenfolk. Most of the women have unfortunately a difficult and 181 562 152 dangerous temperament, which, until they have learnt self-control, and have been inspired with higher ideals, makes them anything but an elevating influence in village society.

562 593 Though theoretically they are supposed to be entirely in subjection to the male sex, in practice they can, and often do, maintain a very firm hold on their husbands. I have known many men who are in mortal terror of their wives. Indeed, I am often inclined to think that it is the poor oppressed Egyptian *man* who has a claim to my sympathy, and that the over-ruled, oppressed wife is somewhat of a myth.

583 593 578 More often than not a man marries a girl from his own village, the favourite marriage being with a daughter of his father's brother. On the smallest provocation, some imagined slight, for example, a girl will run off to her father's or brother's house, and remain there until her husband, from fear of mischief being made against him in the village by his wife's relations, is induced to agree to do whatever his wife demands of him. She may require him to buy her gold earrings, a nose-ring, an anklet, or fine clothes, and, though a poor man, he may feel obliged to purchase one or [406] more of these articles for fear of what his wife may do. Many men have run into debt for such reasons.

586 428 581 A man of my acquaintance, who owns a certain amount of land and is by way of being one of the rather superior people of his village, divorced his wife a year or two ago. She was quite a decent woman, but, her relations being poor, she had no land of her own, and, moreover, her husband's brother had died, bequeathing his widow a *feddān* (acre) of land and a little money. My acquaintance had his eye on this land, which was family property, belonging originally to his father, and the only way he could obtain it was by marrying his brother's widow. He did not want to have two wives, for it is expensive to keep up such an establishment; also, monogamy [595] is becoming much more common in Egypt, and to have more than one wife is looked upon as rather barbarous even among the peasants. The only thing to do was to get rid of his first wife.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The poor woman was in great distress, and begged me to intercede for her. I spoke to the man about it, but the *feddān* of land proved to be too much of a temptation to him, and he accordingly obtained his divorce.[1] For some time after this he was ashamed to meet me, and always got out of my way when he knew I was coming to the village. However, his divorced wife was lucky enough to get another husband fairly quickly, and, moreover, one who was in an even better position than her former partner, whom dire vengeance has overtaken in the person of his new wife (Fig. 15). This woman is inordinately jealous, and if her wretched husband is a few minutes later in returning home from his work than she thinks he ought to be she flies into a passion and imagines that he has gone to see his former wife, or, rather, "to look upon her," as she puts it. For this reason she has, on more than one occasion, left his house and gone to her brother's, where she has remained for two or three days before her husband could by any means persuade her to return to him.

FIG. 15. HUSBAND AND JEALOUS WIFE

One day when I was visiting this man's village I was informed that his wife had again left him and remained in her brother's house for six days, because the man had gone to sell some of his *dura* (maize) to a customer living in the street in which his divorced wife now resides with her new husband. The jealous woman had returned to her husband's house only the evening before my visit! Her brother had warmly espoused her cause and told his sister's husband that in future he was not so much as to cast a look in the direction of his former wife!

[1] I think he obtained his divorce on the ground of her childlessness—see Chapter VI.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

F E 585 789
F E 586

common to all classes in Egypt, but now survives only among the *fellāḥīn*.

Among the Copts divorce is never permitted, but among the Muslims it is not a difficult matter to arrange, though it is necessary for a man or woman to produce some valid reason for taking this course of action. The parties, or perhaps the husband or the wife only, go before the *kāḍi* and say that they wish to be divorced. A sum of money is sometimes paid to the other party by the one who applies for the divorce. A man is permitted to divorce his wife if she is childless; that is to say, if he wishes to get rid of her. If after such a separation the parties wish to marry again they can do so. The 'triple divorce' is a much more serious affair, as will be seen in the following story.

F [842]
F [241] [142]
F 887 586

FIG. 42. THE OLD MAN WHO DIVORCED HIS WIFE

An old man whom I have known for several years (Fig. 42) came to me in great distress when I arrived in his village. He is eighty years of age or more, and owns most, if not all, the looms in the place. I thought he seemed very bent, and he hobbled along with the aid of a stick, followed by a grinning crowd of villagers. He fell down at my feet and began to kiss my boots, and appeared to be beside himself with grief. It appeared that shortly before my arrival he had got into a temper with his wife (Fig. 43), who is considerably younger than he is, and in a fit of rage had divorced her by the triple divorce. This divorce is obtained by a man saying to his wife " I divorce you " three times over, in the presence of witnesses. Once this is done he cannot remarry his wife, however much he may wish to do so, unless she first marries another man,

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

887 who must consummate the marriage. After this, if the parties agree,
586 they can be divorced, and the original husband can marry the woman again.

The old man begged me to see if I could do anything to help him, but I told him that there was nothing I could do, and that, in any case, at his age he ought no longer to be contemplating marriage, but had better direct his thoughts to preparing himself for death. I was told by some of the villagers that the divorced wife had been to a magician, who had written a charm to make the old man mad with love for her. Nearly every time I went to this village I found the old man mooning about the street near the house where his divorced wife was staying, and the villagers told me that he was always sitting there, in the hope of getting a glimpse of the woman, and that on market days he would buy her presents of meat and material for dresses, which he left at her house. I made the acquaintance of the wife, a tall, rather fine-looking woman. She appeared to be very happy and cheerful, and quite amused at the display of love on the part of her late husband. Just before I left Egypt there were rumours that her son by a former marriage, a grown-up man with a wife and family of his own, was negotiating for the marriage of his mother with another man! If this takes place I fear the worst for my poor old friend!

791
832

[291]

431
152

FIG. 43. DIVORCED WIFE OF THE OLD MAN

584

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER VI

FERTILITY RITES

RITES to ensure the birth of children are practically world-wide, and are of great variety. The failure to produce offspring involved the weakening of the tribe, which in early times depended upon its numerical strength for its defence against hostile neighbours. Hence the importance of the possession of children, especially of the male sex.

Love for their children is a marked trait in the character of the modern Egyptians. I have often seen the roughest *fellāḥ* handle his sick child with remarkable tenderness when he has brought it to me in the hope that I might be able to cure it of some complaint.

Muslim law permits a man to put away his wife if she has no children, and a woman divorced for this cause has small chance of obtaining another husband when once the reason for her divorce has become known. Hence the prospect of childlessness is a very real terror to a wife, and the methods to which women resort in order to prevent such a catastrophe are numerous.

Some years ago, when I was working at a large collection of charms and various magical appliances at the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, it occurred to me that certain so-called pendants which my brother had brought me from Egypt might have some magical powers attached to them. These pendants are modern copies of ancient Egyptian blue glazed amulets, representing gods, goddesses, sacred animals, or scarabs. I showed these objects to an Egyptian sheikh then resident in Oxford, and asked him what they were used for. After some hesitation he told me that they were women's charms, and were used in Upper Egypt as a means of ensuring the birth of children. I have found that such charms are in great request in all the provinces south of Cairo that I have visited. The sheikh also told me that a man travelling about Upper Egypt with such charms in his possession would be besieged, as he approached a village, by crowds of women begging to be allowed to step over these amulets.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

F
754
M89
158
[586]
F
754
158

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

over again. Finding that he got no better, his wife divorced him, whereupon the *ḳāḍi* asked for her in marriage, and was accepted. Meanwhile, the poor husband wandered aimlessly about, saying that he was king of his native village. He collected *būṣ*—dry *dura* (maize) stalks—each stalk of which he thought was a gun. With these he armed himself and the young lads of the village, and told them that he was their king, and that they must follow him to fight against the other villages. On the day of the weekly market he would repair to the market-place, seize large pieces of meat hung up for sale, and eat them raw. He would also pounce upon the fish which the fishermen had caught in the pond adjoining the village. At last the *'omdeh*, or headman, of the village, finding that the poor fellow had become a disturbing element in the place, wrote to headquarters about him, and he was removed to an asylum. Here he died, but up to the last the one sensible word he was constantly uttering was his wife's name. The events recorded still form a common topic of conversation in the madman's native village.

F
[189]

FIG. 117. CHARM TO DRAW A MAN OR WOMAN FROM A DISTANCE

F
690
754

I myself have seen the *ḳāḍi* who played such a prominent and cruel part in this bit of village history, and the poor madman's wife whom he married figures in the following account of how a woman can be drawn from a distance.

F
754
M84

To bring a man or woman from a distance the magician proceeds as follows. He takes four branches of a pomegranate-tree and sticks them into the ground, tying them together at the top. He then makes a paper figure of a man or woman, and writes a charm on it (Fig. 117). The figure shown in the accompanying photograph was made and inscribed for me by the Coptic magician

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE FELLAHĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

964 The mother of this Sheikh, who was very devoted to her son, did not survive him for many years. I was present at her funeral, which was attended by a large crowd of friends and relatives. She was buried in a grave near the tomb of her saintly son.

792 158 The sheikh ʿAbdu 'l-Laṭīf lived in a small village in Middle Egypt, where some of his family still reside. An old man, the son of the sheikh's paternal uncle, is well known to me.[1] The sheikh ʿAbdu 'l-Laṭīf was, in his lifetime, looked upon as a *walī*.[2] Insanity is the usual qualification for this high standing among the Muslim saints of Egypt, persons thus afflicted being regarded as the favourites of God. The sheikh had a habit of entering the houses of the people at night, after the doors had been locked, and while the evening meal was being cooked; for locked doors formed no barriers to the egress or ingress of this holy man. On entering [269] he would immediately eat up all the food; meat, bread, and vegetables, no matter how large the quantity, would all be devoured on the spot. Any glass bottles that happened to be lying about might be included in this repast, for these he would bite up and [152] swallow without drawing any blood. There was only one thing he feared, and that was water. If anyone threw a few drops of water at him he would run away in terror, as fast as his legs could carry him. My informant remembered him well, and he told me that on one occasion the sheikh entered his house after the entrance door had been securely locked and ate up all the food, including soup prepared for the evening meal.

792 766 798 [969] When the sheikh died hundreds of people attended his funeral, and, being a very good man, he made his bearers walk quickly to the grave.[3] Above it has been erected the usual domed tomb; it is situated near that of the venerated sheikh Umbārak (Fig. 140) for whom a *mūlid*, or festival, is held once every year.[4]

One year, on the occasion of this festival, a man climbed on to 769 688 the outside of the tomb of the sheikh ʿAbdu 'l-Laṭīf without first removing his shoes. Some of the people standing round remonstrated with him for this act of irreverence, but he replied, "Who is the sheikh ʿAbdu 'l-Laṭīf? He is nobody!" and refused to climb down or to take off his shoes. However, when he wanted

[1] At the moment of writing this I received a letter from Egypt telling me of this old man's death. He is the same man who divorced his wife by the triple [586] divorce, described in Chapter V, pp. 95f.

[2] *Walī* means 'friend' (*i.e.*, of God), and a Muslim saint is commonly so designated.

[3] See Chapter VII, p. 113.

[4] See Chapter XVI, pp. 252 ff.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

F A 585

entertained all the household of Pharaoh." This account suggests that in ancient as in modern times the bride's furniture was conveyed with some ceremony from her parents' house to that of her husband (p. 93); we also see that the ancient like the modern bridegroom used to entertain his male friends on the night of his marriage (p. 93).

F A 586

It is stated on p. 95 that a sum of money is sometimes paid by the party who applies for a divorce to the other party. That, as can be seen from the ancient marriage-contract translated above, and from those published by Professor Griffith,[1] was the prevailing custom in late Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Egypt. Ancient bills of divorcement are still extant, the earliest dating from the time of Darius, and some of them have been published and translated by Professor Griffith.[2]

F A 847 789

It is interesting to observe, in connexion with the modern practice (p. 107) of a mother's attaching a small piece of fox-skin to the head of her last-born living child to ensure her bearing again, that the sign (*ms*), used in writing the verb *msy* (give birth) and its derivatives, consists in well-formed examples of three fox-skins tied together.[3] This suggests that there may have been some association of foxes with fertility in ancient Egypt.

F A 764 778 823

The water used for washing a dead Muslim is brought either from a mosque or from some sacred well or pool connected with a sheikh (p. 109). Similarly, in ancient times the formulæ pronounced while the washing of the corpse took place state that the water has issued from Elephantine, and so is the exudation of Osiris, or that it has been drawn from some sacred pool connected with the sun-cult, or that it is the efflux of the sun-god or the womb of the sky-goddess out of which the god emerged.[4]

F [794]

That the washer of the corpse may be a *fiḳīh* (p. 109) shows that this performance still possesses some, though probably quite vague, religious significance.

080

The utterly uncontrolled grief displayed by the women when

[1] See p. 291, footnote 6.

[2] *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, vol. iii, p. 117.

A [113]

[3] See A. M. Blackman, *Man*, vol. ix, pp. 9 f.; L. Borchardt, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xliv, pp. 75 f.; A. Erman, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xlv, p. 92.

[4] See A. M. Blackman, *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et l'archéologie égyptiennes*, vol. xxxix, pp. 44 ff.; *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. xl, pp. 57–66, 86–91; *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. v, pp. 117 ff., 157 ff.

585 The bridegroom too has made himself ready. He
[515] has had a bath in his best friend's house. His best clothes have been brought, and the *mizayen* has come to groom him and put henna on his hands. Outside a crowd of people are waiting for him to come out. At last he is ready. His men friends ring him round with candles, and a torchlight procession begins. He holds a white handkerchief over his face as if to mask himself, as they strike up songs of love and pleasure (*mawâwîl*), which mingle with the sound of shots. Meanwhile the women throw pinches of salt over the men. When the family house is reached, the bridegroom's friends snatch him from the crowd and drag him in. The young bride is already waiting, surrounded by the women who have tested her virginity, and the marriage is consummated without much secrecy. In the street outside, amidst the cries of the crowd, singing and dancing goes on all night and all the next day. Coloured sweets and treacly pastries are
[262] handed round. On this day there is no thought of economy. After his marriage the young man spends a week or a fortnight without going to work, and during this time he is called "Prince" (*amîr*).

592 The household is thus begun, but for several years more
606 the couple will be dependent on the husband's family. If
554 the wife is clever, obeys her mother-in-law, and bears her
595 husband many male children, he will not take another wife. The same will happen if he is poor, and cannot afford the expenses of another wedding.

595 It is perfectly legal for a Moslem to have four wives, or
586 to divorce. But the fellah makes little use of this Koranic
178 liberty. In the last ten years a considerable decline has been noted in polygamy and divorce. The reason, according to a provincial official, is not so much the progress of civilisation as the increasing poverty of the fellaheen. Lower Egypt being richer, more bigamous marriages are recorded there than in Upper Egypt.

586 Divorce is carried out merely by repeating three times the words of repudiation (*talaq*). Nothing could be easier, but as he is obliged to pay maintenance to the divorced wife, and a new dowry to the one who takes her place, the fellah usually keeps to one wife. Other details also enter
162 into the matter. Statistics show that the country population
585 comprises almost as many men as women. For the whole

843 avoids looking at any dead person, and gazes on portraits of handsome men, perhaps magazine cuttings that she has pinned on the wall. She must be able to eat what she likes. If she is thwarted, the child will be seriously affected.

846 783 [852] Immediately after birth the baby is put in a basket, which serves as a cradle, and is not washed for seven days. The first bath has a ritual significance of purification. It is given by the midwife, and the water is poured from a pot (*abrîq*) specially kept for this purpose, with different ornamentation for a girl and for a boy. The mother is technically impure for thirty or forty days after, according as the child is a girl or a boy. These Moslem customs are also found in Morocco.

844 [431] If at the moment of birth the father is working in the fields, and the child is a son, a friend will run and tell him the good news, for which he can claim a gift. This tradition recalls a text in Jeremiah : 'Cursed be the man who took the tidings to my father, saying to him "A son is born", and who filled him with joy'. (Ch. XX, v.15).

777 751 As soon as the child is born, a blue bead is hung round his neck to turn away the evil eye. For the same reason the boy of whom his parents are so proud may be dressed like a girl, till he is weaned. His mother will give him suck for two years at least, at far too frequent intervals, thus 853 causing gastric troubles. This is the length of time favoured 842 by the ancient Egyptians, by the black peoples of Africa, 586 and by Koranic precept : "Divorced mothers shall give suck to their children for two full years" (Sura II, 233). The peasant women think that by weaning late they will delay another pregnancy.

854 482 When the time comes for her to go out — and this happens very soon — she carries the infant astride her shoulder, which does not prevent her from carrying a pot full of water on her head. While she is working in the fields she puts her baby on the ground, near the path which threads the crops, in the shadow of the maize. The baby does not always have something to lie on, but rolls in the furrow, puts earth in its mouth, screams, sleeps and gets used to it all. If it cries 853 too loud, any passing mother will give it her breast.

854 857 The child stays at home until his fifth year. He soon gets used to the company of the animals there. Before long he is capable of looking after them and can take the

59. In 1934, of the 30,784 Moslem women who were married 15,248 were spinsters, 13,837 divorcees and 1,709 widows. 12,688 of the total number were below the age of 20. In 1941 the *mudiriya* of Minia had the fewest divorces, 3.9 a thousand, while in Cairo and Suez the proportion was 12.8 a thousand.

60. In 1934, out of 3,278 divorces 2,396 were dissolved childless marriages.

61. *T.*—The following table shows the actual achievement, which though considerable is much less than the declared aim. The number of school-children in all kinds of schools is shown as a percentage of the number of children between the ages of 5 and 14.

Year	Children between 5 and 14	Children on school registers (*)	Percentage
1927	3,439,269	770,000	22.9
1931	3,700,000	891,682	24.1
1934	3,905,000	941,760	24.1
1937	4,117,941	1,309,000	31.8
1940	4,335,000	1,563,590	36.1

* estimated figures.

Since 1940, war conditions have made the building of new schools impossible, and Negib el-Hilali Pasha, in his REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM (Cairo, Dec. 1943), admitted that the elementary system was, as a whole, a failure, and that new directives were necessary. The problem is to evolve a genuinely rural school in the village.

62. Selim Hassan : SURVIVALS OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CUSTOMS IN MODERN EGYPT (in Arabic) in the BULLETIN OF THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF COPTIC ART, Vol. II, 1936, pp. 47-71.

63. *T.*—About the middle of August, when the Nile has reached its highest, the dam of the now filled-in canal at Fumm el-Khalig in Cairo was formerly cut with great ceremony, and a doll (in antiquity an alive woman) was thrown into the rushing floods. (These Festivities are still held, culminating in a firework display attended by the Governor and notables, and the day is a public holiday.)

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

even among the patterns of Godfearingness in all times and all countries. Though a man has several wives, that is not a proof of his unbridled sensuality. A man often takes an additional wife because his first one has not presented him with the heirs he longs for—sons in particular—as was the case with the Prophet himself; or matrimonial relationships have become impossible through illness, old age or incompatibility. And it always testifies to some tenderness of feeling when the husband will not put away his first wife or the mother of his children. This step, easy as the law makes it, is resorted to only in exceptional cases, especially if the children are still alive. The great ease with which divorce may be effected is a much weaker side of Mohammedanism, and there are of course a considerable number of dissolute fellows who take advantage of this and do not fill their houses with expensive, scolding, legitimate wives (the number of whom cannot exceed four), but indulge their passions by a change of wares, be they free or slaves. Some men get as far as a fifth wife without ever having had more than one at a time. This does not lower a man in the estimation of the people, if he does not do anything not permitted by religion, though it will be easily understood that such a person is often unsuccessful in his wooings. Any one may keep as many female slaves as he pleases; if one of them has presented him with children, however, the excellent custom that prevails demands that he shall not sell her, still less her children, who according to the law are in all respects legitimate. The father must always maintain the children that any divorced wife has had to him. The question of expense, therefore, forms a beneficial check upon licentiousness, and from this and other reasons it is very common among the higher classes, and among the middle and lower classes almost the rule, for a man to live his whole life long with only a single wife. Unfortunately no statistics are to be had relating to these matters, since the state does not concern itself about matrimonial affairs; these are attended to by the ecclesiastical judge or kadi.

595 [842] 586 [554] 567 586 [595]

In divorce cases this functionary, after some weak attempts

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

586 at reconciliation, has always to give effect to the expressed wish of the husband. The wife also can press for a divorce, and is not, therefore, devoid of all rights; but in this case, besides losing her maintenance, she also, as a rule, loses the [583] jointure that would otherwise fall to be paid to her by the husband as stipulated in the marriage contract. The divorce cannot be judicially forced from the husband, he must say the words "Thou art repudiated," and if he will not do so he has to give his wife a *bêt shêr 'ai*, that is, a separate dwelling and maintenance; it is a kind of divorce *a mensa et thoro*. [587] During the continuance of this relationship the woman cannot marry again, though of course the husband can. But during the proceedings, with which a multitude of laymen, both summoned and unsummoned, mix themselves up, the husband often becomes morally pliant, or is induced by cunning to utter the words, whereupon the case at once comes to an end. The phrase "thou art repudiated" is fatally momentous, the mere utterance of it, even in the heat of a quarrel, results in separation, and "thrice repudiated" even in complete divorce (see below). If a person writes these words down and in joke asks a Mohammedan to read them, he absolutely refuses to read them aloud. The asseveration "by repudiation," or stronger "by threefold repudiation," is equivalent to a solemn oath. The greater number of disputes in cases of matrimonial separation arise on account of the children, whom neither the father nor mother would like to part with. They, together with the matter of expense, are what unites most closely the bonds of marriage, otherwise so loose. Up to a certain age, which differs among the various so-called sects of Mohammedans—among the Hanafites, for instance, being the seventh year, among the Shafaites [595] the second—the child remains with its mother, while the father pays for its support, and in return has the right of seeing it as often as he wishes. Henceforth the father, if he has satisfactorily supported it hitherto, can take the child altogether to himself, and he usually does so if it is a boy.

[587] The divorced wife returns to her parents, who generally soon succeed in finding another settlement for her. In a

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

great many cases the separation is only temporary, the husband and wife make up their quarrel and come together again without any farther formalities than the consent of the kadi. When the severest form of divorce has been pronounced, however, namely, with the formula of threefold repudiation, a reunion becomes not such an easy matter. For such cases there exists the well known and peculiar law of the *mostahill* (literally "permission-maker"). A third person has formally to marry the divorced woman and put her away again, whereupon the husband can again take back his former wife. Men who are endowed with the minimum of personal advantages are usually selected to act as these middle men, and they are paid for their welcome services. Cases of this sort are certainly rare, being considered disgraceful. It sometimes happens also that the pair joined in this momentary marriage take each other's fancy, the intermediary will not give up the woman joined to him, and no power can tear them asunder if they do not wish it. The law just mentioned is said to be founded on the awakening of jealousy.

The man of the middle and lower ranks who has more than one wife usually has his harem, with children and attendants, in different houses, or in different portions of the same house specially constructed for the purpose; and in order to give satisfaction to all parties, a good polygamous husband eats and sleeps in regular alternation, the one day in the house of one wife, the next in that of another. These look upon themselves as relatives, and from time to time pay each other at least ceremonial visits. Indeed there are a great many examples of several wives living together peacefully, obediently, and free from jealousy. Of quarrels arising from jealousy much less is heard than one would have beforehand assumed. By his supreme powers the husband maintains order, and jealousy frequently takes even the form of a praiseworthy struggle how each wife may appear more amiable in the eyes of her husband than her rivals. Most women give up from the first the idea of requiring their husband to remain true to them, and jealous women are even laughed at by their female friends. The ideal romantic love

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

rank they hold in the intellectual world is not a consequence of want of understanding, but of want of knowledge; it is a consequence of their stagnating religion, and of the hostility of former governments to enlightenment. Besides being forbidden between very near relatives, marriage is also forbidden between such as have been suckled at the same breast. Among the ancient Egyptians, as already mentioned, marriages were permitted even between brothers and sisters.

At the preliminary betrothal the marriage contract is made between the fathers or guardians on both sides. The father agrees to pay to the father-in-law of his son a certain sum, and part of this is paid at once, the other part is always tied up and settled upon the wife in case she should happen to be divorced. These payments, however, must not be understood as if the parents were simply selling their daughter; the "bride's treasure" is in most cases spent on clothes and ornaments for the bride, and the bridegroom often gives these directly instead of money. And the bride who brings nothing to her husband except her person, lays up for herself from this bride's treasure a fund for cases of misfortune. If the wife has any independent means she does not share it with her husband—it remains her personal property. In the East, accordingly, mercenary marriages—so incompatible with manly dignity—are unknown.

On the evening of the wedding-day is held the marriage banquet, on which great sums are often expended by the more wealthy. Everybody in the place is invited to the house of the bride's parents; whole hecatombs (this is often literally correct) of sheep are slaughtered and devoured with a rapidity that has become proverbial, and with the most voracious appetite. Only the very poorest confine themselves to inviting none but the members of their intimate family circle.

In the course of the day the bride and bridegroom frequently take a bath, to which they often proceed in grand procession. In other cases the bridegroom, when evening has come, takes off his clothes in front of the house before the gaping crowds, and has his whole body soaped and bathed by the barber. The chief festivity does not take place, however, until nightfall.